

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEL AV 02403 052312Z

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ACTION NODS-00

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 919

S E C R E T TEL AVIV 2403

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FOR THE SECRETARY FROM TOON

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR LE SY IS

SUBJ: LEBANESE SITUATION

REF: STATE 81259

1. I CALLED ON ALLON 1130 APRIL 5 TO CONVEY MESSAGE CONTAINED REFTEL. I TOLD HIM WE HAD RECEIVED A SOVIET NOTE ON APRIL 2 REGARDING THE POSITION OF THE AMERICAN FLEET IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN. IN OUR REPLY WE WILL STATE THAT WE HAVE NO INTENT TO INTERVENE AND WE WILL URGE ALL CONCERNED TO SHOW RESTRAINT IN THE LEBANESE SITUATION. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT NO ONE SHOULD INTERVENE AND THAT ALL OUTSIDE PARTIES SHOULD URGE RESTRAINT ON ANY LEBANESE FACTION WITH WHOM THEY HAVE INFLUENCE. I SAID THAT YOU WANTED HIM TO KNOW THAT THE FLEET IS IN THE AREA FOR POSSIBLE EVACUATION PURPOSES AND AS A WARNING TO THE SOVIETS. I SAID THAT OUR VIEW, BASED ON AMBASSADOR BROWN'S ASSESSMENT IS THAT THE NEXT FEW DAYS ARE ESPECIALLY CRITICAL AND RESTRAINT FROM ALL OUTSIDE PARTIES IS ESSENTIAL TO PRESERVE CEASEFIRE.

2. ALLON THANKED ME FOR THE REPORT AND SAID HE HOPED EVACUATION WOULD NOT BE NECESSARY. HE THEN REVIEWED THE CURRENT SITUATION IN LEBANON AS THE ISRAELIS SEE IT: SYRIAN TROOPS IN APPROXIMATELY BATTALION STRENGTH AND CAMOULAGED AS PLA ARE OPERATING IN THE NORTH AROUND TRIPOLI. SYRIAN NAVY UNITS ARE OPERATING IN TRIPOLI HARBOR TO BLOCK SMUGGLING OF ARMS TO THE LEFTISTS. THIS HAS LED

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 TEL AV 02403 052312Z

JUMBLATT TO COMPLAIN THAT SYRIA HAS DISPATCHED FORCES TO LEBANON.

SYRIA DENIES THIS BUT HAS NOW STATED PUBLICLY THAT IF FIGHTING RESUMES IT WILL NOT WATCH EVENTS INDIFFERENTLY; ISRAEL INTERPRETS THIS TO BE A PUBLIC COMMITMENT TO INTERVENE. ALLON NOTED THE RECENT EGYPTIAN STATEMENT THAT EGYPT WOULD NOT REJECT AN INITIATIVE IN LEBANON BY SAUDI ARABIA, KUWAIT, FRANCE OR THE UNITED STATES AND IF THE CEASE-FIRE DOES NOT HOLD THEN AN INTER-ARAB OR OTHER INTERNATIONAL FORCE MUST ACT TO RESTORE ORDER; ALLON SEES THIS STATE AS AN ATTEMPT TO DETER ISRAEL.

3. ALLON ALSO NOTED RECENT REPORTS THAT COUVE DE MURVILLE MIGHT VISIT LEBANON; HE SAID HE HOPED COUVE WOULD NOT DO SO BECAUSE FRENCH MOVES NOW WOULD ONLY CONFUSE THE ISSUE, ALTHOUGH HE KNOWS THAT SADAT HOPES THAT COUVE WILL GO TO LEBANON AND SUGGESTED HE DO SO. SADAT ALSO HAS REPEATED HIS PLAN FOR 4-6 UNNAMED ARAB COUNTRIES TO ACT TOGETHER TO CREATE A CORDON SANITAIRE BETWEEN THE TWO FACTIONS, A MOVE WHICH WOULD BENEFIT THE CHRISTIANS WHO WANT A FEDERATION OF TWO COMMUNITIES AND WHICH ISRAEL WOULD WELCOME.

4. I TOLD ALLON THAT WE BELIEVE THIS WOULD BE A MISTAKE. WE BELIEVE THE CHRISTIANS SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO WORK WITHIN THE SYSTEM, RECOGNIZE THAT MUSLIM COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE PREVIOUS SYSTEM WERE JUSTIFIED, AND MOVE TOWARD A COMPROMISE SOLUTION THAT WOULD MEET MOSLEM GRIEVANCE AND PRESERVE INTEGRITY OF LEBANON. WE HOPE THAT ISRAEL WILL USE WHATEVER INFLUENCE IT HAS WITH THE CHRISTIANS TO MOVE THEM IN THIS DIRECTION. ALLON DISCOUNTED ISRAELI INFLUENCE AMONG KEY CHRISTIAN FIGURES BUT WENT ON TO SAY THAT ISRAEL DOES NOT WANT TO SEE THE CHRISTIANS SLAUGHTERED. ISRAEL CONTINUES TO TURN A BLIND EYE TO SYRIAN MOVES UNDER SAIQA DISGUISE AND IS NOT LOOKING FOR AN EXCUSE TO ALTER ITS DEFENSE LINE IN THE NORTH; ISRAEL, IN OTHER WORDS, CONTINUES TO SHOW RESTRAINT. HE CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT IT REMAINS NECESSARY FOR US TO KEEP IN CLOSE TOUCH. I ASKED HIM TO HOLD OUR EXCHANGE CLOSELY AND HE SAID HE WOULD DO SO.
TOON

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